

AFGHANISTAN

Mr. MCCONNELL. Mr. President, now on a completely different matter, yesterday, under oath, General McKenzie and General Milley both confirmed they also agreed with the commander on the ground. They agreed we should keep 2,500 troops in Afghanistan. These top generals gave President Biden exactly the advice the President told the American people he had not received.

To be very clear, the Commander in Chief gets to make the final decision, no matter what the advisers suggest. But he needs to own his decision.

The President publicly misstating what advice he got from his top generals is corrosive to the civil-military dynamic that keeps America safe.

The military did their job. They gave their best military advice. It was rejected. So they saluted and executed the order of the Commander in Chief. That is the way it is supposed to work. But having rejected their advice, the President doesn't get to claim he never received it, nor does he get to claim, as he has since tried to pretend, that the only alternative to his botched retreat was sending 10,000 soldiers back to Afghanistan.

That is a false choice. We have heard directly from the two senior military officers in the chain of command, as well as the President's principal military adviser, the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs.

Everyone with an ounce of common sense knows President Biden's botched retreat was not the extraordinary success the President claimed. As General Milley acknowledged, it is more accurate to describe the withdrawal as a strategic failure.

We have now heard confirmation from our top military officers that the terrorist threat in Afghanistan is already growing. And relying on over-the-horizon counterterrorism leaves us with much less ability to do anything at all about it.

What a debacle. We face a greater terrorist threat from Afghanistan than we did before we withdrew, we have less intelligence about that growing threat, and we have fewer tools with which to combat it. This administration gave our enemies in Afghanistan everything they wanted and got less than nothing in return.

So, Mr. President, I know some of my colleagues want to unilaterally declare an end to the War on Terrorism. Ah, if only it were that easy. But the terrorists aren't through with us.

I hope my Democratic colleagues will think twice before they compound the failures in Afghanistan by trying to narrow or repeal the 2001 authorization for the use of military force. I, for one, will strenuously oppose any further efforts by the Democratic administration or this Democratic Congress to take away any more tools or authorities that our military servicemembers and intelligence professionals need to keep our country safe from our enemies.

At some point we will have a different administration that will better

understand how to protect America for the long term. At this rate, they will need all the tools they can possibly get.

CONCLUSION OF MORNING BUSINESS

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Morning business is closed.

EXECUTIVE SESSION

EXECUTIVE CALENDAR

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, the Senate will proceed to executive session and resume consideration of the following nomination, which the clerk will report.

The senior assistant legislative clerk read the nomination of Jessica Lewis, of Ohio, to be an Assistant Secretary of State (Political-Military Affairs).

Mr. MCCONNELL. I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The senior assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. SASSE. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

VOTE ON LEWIS NOMINATION

Under the previous order, the question is, Will the Senate advise and consent to the Lewis nomination?

Mr. SASSE. I request the yeas and nays.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there a sufficient second?

There appears to be a sufficient second.

The clerk will call the roll.

The senior assistant legislative clerk called the roll.

Mr. THUNE. The following Senators are necessarily absent: the Senator from Missouri (Mr. BLUNT), the Senator from Idaho (Mr. CRAPO), and the Senator from Kansas (Mr. MORAN).

The result was announced—yeas 70, nays 27, as follows:

[Rollcall Vote No. 390 Ex.]

YEAS—70

Baldwin	Hagerty	Padilla
Bennet	Hassan	Peters
Blumenthal	Heinrich	Portman
Booker	Hickenlooper	Reed
Brown	Hirono	Risch
Burr	Inhofe	Romney
Cantwell	Kaine	Rosen
Capito	Kelly	Rounds
Cardin	King	Rubio
Carper	Klobuchar	Sanders
Casey	Leahy	Schatz
Collins	Lee	Schumer
Coons	Lujan	Shaheen
Cornyn	Manchin	Sinema
Cortez Masto	Markey	Smith
Cramer	McConnell	Stabenow
Duckworth	Menendez	Tester
Durbin	Merkley	Tillis
Feinstein	Murkowski	Van Hollen
Fischer	Murphy	Warner
Gillibrand	Murray	
Graham	Ossoff	

Warnock	Whitehouse	Wyden
Warren	Wicker	Young

NAYS—27

Barrasso	Grassley	Paul
Blackburn	Hawley	Sasse
Boozman	Hoeven	Scott (FL)
Braun	Hyde-Smith	Scott (SC)
Cassidy	Johnson	Shelby
Cotton	Kennedy	Sullivan
Cruz	Lankford	Thune
Daines	Lummis	Toomey
Ernst	Marshall	Tuberville

NOT VOTING—3

Blunt	Crapo	Moran
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The nomination was confirmed. The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, the motion to reconsider is considered made and laid upon the table, and the President will be immediately notified of the Senate's action.

EXECUTIVE CALENDAR

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will report the nomination.

The legislative clerk read the nomination of Robert T. Anderson, of Washington, to be Solicitor of the Department of the Interior.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Maryland.

UNANIMOUS CONSENT REQUEST—EXECUTIVE CALENDAR

Mr. CARDIN. Mr. President, in a few moments, I am going to make a unanimous consent request in regard to Dilawar Syed to be the Deputy Administrator of the Small Business Administration.

Let me give you a little bit of background on Mr. Syed's nomination and why I am using this unusual process to advance the nomination to the floor for floor consideration.

We all know the tremendous need at the Small Business Administration as a result of COVID-19. We worked together, Democrats and Republicans, and created many new programs to help small businesses. We created the Paycheck Protection Program, both the first—and we modified it—and then a second round. We created the Economic Injury Disaster Loan and Loan Advance Program and the Targeted Grant Program.

We provided for the Shuttered Venue Operators Grant Program, we established the Restaurant Revitalization Fund, and the list goes on and on and on. All this created new programs and responsibilities for the Small Business Administration. And we did this together, Democrats and Republicans, in order to advance the needs for small businesses during COVID-19.

Over \$1 trillion of funds were administered by the Small Business Administration as a result of our initiatives. And our constituents had tremendous needs. Tens of millions of small businesses have benefited from what we did to help them through COVID-19.

I know that every one of our offices has gotten numerous inquiries from small businesses as to how these programs were stood up, whether they could qualify, concerns about their applications being filed promptly, the